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## Congress must act on clean energy

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As state legislators, we are painfully aware of the unique challenges that Hawai'i faces as the most oil-dependent state in the nation. However, unless we address oil dependency at the national level, any action our state takes to wean ourselves off oil may be hamstrung by federal actions that counteract our state's clean energy initiatives.

For this reason, we and 29 of our Hawai'i colleagues, and 1,192 other state legislators nationwide, have signed a joint letter to support CLEAN: the Coalition of Legislators for Energy Action Now. CLEAN is a bipartisan coalition of state legislators nationwide who support the passage of a decisive and transformational national clean energy policy that will support clean energy technology, regulate America's energy industry effectively and modernize our energy infrastructure.

CLEAN's primary belief: sending \$800 million each day out of our country to pay for oil is detrimental to America's economic health, national security and our environmental well-being.

CLEAN is calling on Congress to produce meaningful legislation that will change the regulatory landscape by promoting research and development and implementation of clean and renewable energy systems, maximizing energy efficiency and reducing our reliance on foreign oil. By developing America's clean energy potential, we can, as a nation, revitalize our economy and create energy systems that are cleaner and cheaper to operate in the long run. CLEAN also believes that we will make America safer by reducing our dependence on oil imported from volatile and politically unstable regions.

We know that in the long run, the price of oil will only increase. We saw what the future could hold when oil prices spiked at over \$140 per barrel, and despite technological innovations that allow us to tap previously unusable oil fields, we are still rapidly exhausting our planet's oil resources.

At the same time, the Chinese and Indian economies are experiencing rapid growth. As demand increases, supplies dwindle and extraction becomes more challenging, prices will rise accordingly. This will make an already volatile global oil market even more susceptible to supply disruptions.

Given these trends, America would do well to invest in its own clean energy resources. Maintaining the status quo is extremely risky and does not offer America any economic development opportunities.

The European Union has long recognized this fact and has adopted aggressive policies to reduce its members' dependency on oil and minimize its carbon footprint. For example, a proposed "super grid" in Europe's North Sea would power 70 million homes and connect hydro, solar, wave and wind resources in nine countries and has the backing of French President Nicolas Sarkozy and UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown, among others.

The actions America takes (or does not take) to transform its energy infrastructure will have an impact on American life that cannot be overstated. Not since the era of industrialization has technological change held such importance in our country's fate, and the fate of America's people.

Continuing to burn oil, especially to produce electricity, when there are so many alternatives available to us, is an archaic, costly and irresponsible policy, and one that will land us in nothing but trouble. Congress has lagged too long in enacting clean energy legislation. While we in Hawai'i are fortunate to have a unique partnership agreement with the U.S. Department of Energy, this inaction by Congress is exemplified by the fact that many other states, and even the Pentagon, have chosen to "go at it alone,"

pursuing renewable energy on their own terms in a patchwork of effort throughout the nation.

By developing our wealth of renewable resources and overhauling and modernizing our energy infrastructure, we can invigorate America's stagnant economy, enhance and protect our national and global environmental integrity. Simultaneously, we place our nation in an advantageous global-political situation that makes us more energy and politically secure.

As a nation, we can no longer afford to bide our time while other countries outpace us in developing clean energy technology and a modern energy infrastructure.

CLEAN is calling on Congress to act now, to keep our hard-earned billions in our states, to create a robust economy with new green jobs, and to make our nation more secure by enacting a national energy policy that supports clean energy technology.

This is what CLEAN stands for and this is what we and our 29 Hawai'i colleagues who have signed on to the CLEAN letter to Congress and President Obama stand for.

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